

Remarks by Lt. Gen. Donald M. Campbell Jr., commanding general, USAREUR

173rd Airborne Brigade Combat team post-deployment uncasing and honor ceremony

May 16, 2013, Vicenza Italy

GOOD MORNING.

WHAT A FITTING TRIBUTE TO THESE BRAVE YOUNG AMERICANS.

**AND WHAT A MAGNIFICENT DAY TO CELEBRATE THE RETURN OF THE
173RD AIRBORNE BRIGADE TO VICENZA—THE “SKY SOLDIERS!”**

**IT’S AN HONOR TO BE HERE AMONGST ONE OF THE MOST ELITE AND
STORIED UNITS IN OUR ARMY.**

**TO THE OUTSTANDING PARATROOPERS IN THE FORMATION TODAY,
YOU LOOK GREAT LIKE ALWAYS—THE EPITOMY OF PROFESSIONALISM
IN U.S. ARMY EUROPE.**

**AND WE’RE VERY LUCKY TO HAVE THE VICENZA HIGH SCHOOL BAND
AND CHOIR WITH US TODAY. YOU GUYS LOOK AND SOUND TERRIFIC!**

**I’D LIKE TO OFFER A SPECIAL WELCOME TO OUR DISTINGUISHED
GUESTS,**

- MAJOR GENERAL DONAHUE**
- COMMAND SERGEANT MAJOR STITZEL**

- MAJOR GENERAL PINO (ITALY)
- BG (R) AND MRS YARBROUGH
- BG NORMAN
- COL AND MRS ROHLING
- CSM AND MRS COSTON
- DISTINGUISHED GUESTS FROM THE VICENZA COMMUNITY
- AND A VERY SPECIAL AND HEARTFELT WELCOME TO THE GOLD STAR FAMILIES THAT ARE HERE WITH US TODAY. YOUR PRESENCE MEANS A LOT TO THE SOLDIERS OF THIS BRIGADE, AND I HOPE YOU HAVE THE CHANCE TO MEET WITH THEM TO SEE THE MANY WAYS IN WHICH YOUR LOVED ONES TOUCHED THE LIVES OF THEIR BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN ARMS.

THANK YOU ALL FOR ATTENDING AS WE WELCOME BACK THESE MAGNIFICENT MEN AND WOMEN OF THE 173RD, UNCASE THE BRIGADE'S COLORS, AND HONOR THE BRAVERY AND SACRIFICE OF THIS INCREDIBLE TEAM.

THE PARATROOPERS AND FAMILIES YOU SEE HERE TODAY REPRESENT THE BEST OUR NATION HAS TO OFFER. WITH LESS THAN 1% OF OUR POPULATION STEPPING UP TO SERVE THE NATION, THESE SONS AND DAUGHTERS, MOTHERS AND FATHERS, BROTHERS AND SISTERS, TRULY REPRESENT THE BRAVEST OF OUR NATION.

ALONGSIDE EVERY ONE OF OUR SOLDIERS ARE THEIR FAMILIES, WHO ALSO SERVE AND SACRIFICE ON BEHALF OF OUR NATION.

OUR FAMILIES ENABLE EACH OF US TO FOCUS ON THE MISSION AT HAND WHETHER AT HOME OR WHILE DEPLOYED IN HARM'S WAY.

PLEASE JOIN ME IN A ROUND OF APPLAUSE FOR THESE AMAZING PARATROOPERS AND THEIR FAMILIES.

AS YOU ALL KNOW SO WELL, OUR NATION HAS BEEN AT WAR FOR NEARLY 12 YEARS.

THE MAJORITY OF THE SOLDIERS STANDING ON THE FIELD BEFORE YOU ENTERED SERVICE AFTER SEPTEMBER 11TH, KNOWING FULL WELL THAT THEY WOULD BE SERVING IN DANGEROUS PLACES LIKE AFGHANISTAN AND IRAQ.

MANY OF THOSE STANDING BEFORE US HAVE DEPLOYED FOUR, FIVE, OR EVEN SIX TIMES.

THE SACRIFICES THEY CONTINUE TO MAKE, AND THE BURDENS ENDURED BY THEIR FAMILIES, DO NOT GO UNNOTICED, AND DESERVE OUR HIGHEST RESPECT AND PRAISE.

AT A TIME WHEN SO FEW ARE WILLING TO STEP UP AND SERVE, YOU HAVE ANSWERED YOUR NATION'S CALL.

**YOU CHOSE TO PUT THE NEEDS OF OTHERS BEFORE YOUR OWN, AND
IN DOING SO ARE MAKING THE WORLD SAFER FOR OUR CHILDREN AND
OUR CHILDREN'S CHILDREN.**

**FOR YOUR COMMITMENT TO SERVE THIS NATION, AND FOR YOUR MANY
SACRIFICES, I THANK YOU.**

**THE SKY SOLDIERS OF THE 173RD ARE PART OF A LONG AND PROUD
TRADITION OF SERVICE.**

**FROM VIETNAM TO IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN, THIS BRIGADE HAS A
REPUTATION FOR GETTING THE TOUGH MISSIONS, AND GETTING THE
JOB DONE LIKE NO OTHER.**

**AS I LOOK OUT UPON THE SOLDIERS STANDING IN THIS FORMATION, I
CAN'T HELP TO THINK THAT THIS IS THE GENERATION THAT WILL
DEFINE THE BRIGADE'S LEGACY.**

**SOLDIERS LIKE SALVATORE GIUNTA, A 173RD SOLDIER AND RECIPIENT
OF THE MEDAL OF HONOR.**

**SOLDIERS LIKE SGT MICHAEL KRAPELS, OF CHOSEN COMPANY, 2-
503RD, WHO, WOUNDED IN 2010, ENDURED MORE THAN 20 SURGERIES
AND 10 MONTHS IN A WHEELCHAIR BEFORE RETURNING TO HIS UNIT
AND DEPLOYING TO AFGHANISTAN TO FIGHT ONCE AGAIN.**

THIS BRIGADE IS FULL OF SAL GIUNTAS... FULL OF MIKE KRAPELS.

ON THIS LAST DEPLOYMENT, OVER 60 SOLDIERS FROM TASK FORCE BAYONET WERE DECORATED FOR VALOR—NINE OF THEM BRONZE STARS WITH V-DEVICE—AND MORE THAN 300 EARNED PURPLE HEARTS.

THIS RECOGNITION SERVES AS A SOLEMN TESTAMENT TO THE BRAVERY AND SACRIFICE OF THIS OUTFIT.THESE ARE THE SOLDIERS OF THE 173RD—THESE ARE THE TRUE HEROES OF TODAY’S GENERATION!

THEY REPRESENT THE BEST AMERICA HAS TO OFFER, AND THEY ARE MAKING THE WORLD SAFE FOR DEMOCRACY.

BUT THERE IS A PRICE...

ON THIS LAST DEPLOYMENT 13 SOLDIERS AND ONE CIVILIAN FROM TASK FORCE BAYONET MADE THE ULTIMATE SACRIFICE.

IN ALL, 89 SKY SOLDIERS HAVE DIED DURING THE CONFLICTS IN AFGHANISTAN AND IRAQ.

THERE ARE NO WORDS THAT CAN CONSOLE A PARENT IN MOURNING, GIVE COMFORT TO A GRIEVING SPOUSE, OR EXPLAIN TO A YOUNG CHILD WHY THEIR MOTHER OR FATHER ISN’T COMING HOME.

WHAT WE CAN OFFER IS TO ALWAYS KEEP THEM ALIVE IN OUR HEARTS, TO BE INSPIRED BY THE WAY THEY LIVED, AND REMAIN IN AWE OF THEIR SACRIFICE.

YOUR LOVED ONES LIVE ON IN THE SPIRITS OF THESE PARATROOPERS STANDING HERE TODAY.

EVERYWHERE THEY GO, THE FALLEN GO WITH THEM, ALIVE IN THE HEARTS OF THESE YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN.

TASK FORCE BAYONET HAS A LOT TO BE PROUD OF.

YOU HAD A TOUGH MISSION IN A TOUGH NEIGHBORHOOD.

AT THE SAME TIME YOU WERE PERFORMING THE DIFFICULT TASK OF CONDUCTING COMBINED COUNTERINSURGENCY OPERATIONS, YOU WERE SIMULTANEOUSLY BUILDING THE CAPABILITY AND CAPACITY OF THE AFGHAN NATIONAL SECURITY FORCES.

IN ADDITION TO PROVIDING COMAND AND CONTROL FOR YOUR ORGANIC UNITS, THE BRIGADE ALSO INTEGRATED TWO PROVINCIAL RECONSTRUCTION TEAMS, 23 SECURITY ASSISTANCE TEAMS, STABILITY FORCE ADVISE AND ASSIST TEAMS, AND A HOST OF OTHER ENABLERS.

IN TOTAL, THE BRIGADE WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE CONTROL AND SUPPORT OF OVER 8,000 SOLDIERS AND CIVILIANS, AND OVER 20,000

**SQUARE MILES OF BATTLESPACE—AN INCREDIBLE RESPONSIBILITY
FOR ONE BRIGADE!**

**AT ALL LEVELS, FROM THE FIRE TEAM TO THE BATTALION AND
BRIGADE LEADERSHIP, YOU DID A TREMENDOUS JOB.**

**AS WE UNCASE THE BRIGADE'S COLORS TODAY, KNOW THAT I AM
PROUD TO SERVE WITH YOU AND GRATEFUL FOR ALL YOU HAVE DONE
AND WILL DO FOR THIS GREAT COUNTRY.**

**YOUR SELFLESS SERVICE IS INSPIRING AND ENSURES THE CONTINUED
AND UNWAVERING STRENGTH OF OUR COUNTRY.**

**TO EVERYONE HERE, COLONEL ROHLING, COMMAND SERGEANT
MAJOR COSTON AND YOUR TEAM—DISTINGUISHED FRIENDS AND
VISITORS, AND ALL OF THE PARATROOPERS AND FAMILIES OF THE
173RD—THANK YOU.**

**THANK YOU FOR ALL YOU DO EVERY DAY AND THANK YOU FOR YOUR
SELFLESS SERVICE TO OUR NATION.**

STRONG SOLDIERS, STRONG TEAMS!